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*Civil Liberty:*

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A  
S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,  
ON  
APRIL the 9th, 1780,  
AT  
GREAT ST. MARY'S CHURCH.

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By WILLIAM COOKE, <sup>K</sup>M.A.  
FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE.

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C A M B R I D G E,

Printed by J. ARCHDEACON Printer to the UNIVERSITY;  
For T. & J. MERRILL, in Cambridge; and sold by T. CADELL, in the Strand,  
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A

S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE



A. S. 1780

AT

GREAT ST. MARY'S CHURCH

BY WILLIAM COOK, M.A.

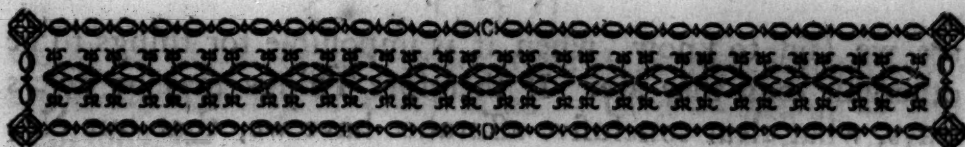
FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE.

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A

# S E R M O N, &c.



I P E T. ii. 16.

AS FREE, NOT USING YOUR LIBERTY FOR THE CLOKE OF  
MALICIOUSNESS, BUT AS THE SERVANTS OF GOD.

**L**IBERTY is the same Civil, Moral, and Religious; and  
in each distinction may be Justly defined — Action of a  
reasonable Being according to the direction of Right or Re-  
straint. But before we enter on the subject, it may be neces-  
sary to make a remark, which may serve as prefatory and  
preliminary to it, and at the same time, instance and illustrate  
the Question: And this is, that all Topics of Power, Govern-  
ment and Civil Liberty are objects of Opinion, not of Science:  
For Opinion is of those Things, which may be many ways;  
\* Science of Those, which can be but One. For then only  
are

\* Πάντες γὰρ ὑπολαμβάνομεν, ὃ ἐπιστάμεθα μὴ ἐνδέχεσθαι ἄλλως εἶναι —  
ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἄρα ἐστὶ τὸ ἐπιστητὸν. Arist. Eth. Lib. 6. Cap. 3.



are we said to know, when it is impossible for things to be otherwise than they are. If therefore Things may be divers ways, what clear conclusive assurance have we, that our Notions of their State and Being are the Right Ones? For Truth is as the Objects of Truth. If its Objects be certain and demonstrable, as in Mathematics and Geometry, Truth will of course be certain and demonstrative. If on the contrary They be vague and variable, contingent only and probable; our Knowledge of them will be but probable and contingent. — You have formed Opinions on these Subjects, on good grounds as appears to you: — Another Man has formed Opinions on the same Subjects very different from yours. — your Opinions are as so many Rights: — His Opinions so many Bars and Restraints to yours. — Compare and balance his Opinions and their Proofs with your own, and such Proofs of them, as shall have satisfied your Reason: — If now upon fair and impartial examination on both sides, you can conscientiously justify the preference you shall give to your own Sentiments; — It is very well, — You *use* your Liberty: — But if on the contrary, having viewed things through the false Medium of Passion, Prejudice or a perverted Judgment, you in consequence thereof make erroneous and wrong Decision; you fall under the Censure of the Apostle, — *using your Liberty for the Cloke of Maliciousness, not as the Servant of God.*

Hence it appears, how little reason we have to flatter our Sagacity in Matters incapable of necessary Proof. How indecent is all dogmatical Assertion, all Pride of Persuasion; and how jealous and distrustful we need be of Ourselves, how patient and forbearing of Others. — But our Hearts deceive us — our Passions warp and distract our Judgment, though  
whilst



whilst we think or act under their Bias and Influence, we abuse our Liberty of every Kind — Civil — Moral — and Religious. —

We are in quest of Truth — we would find it in Error. — Fact and Experience are the high Roads to it : — We explore new Paths of our own — and shape our course through Fancy's Region. Our end is Truth — Tradition means — not Conceit, not Imagination. — Let us then give up our Wit to our Reason, and the flourished Device of Speculative Thought to the bare and naked Letter of Fact and History.

For was there ever a State of Nature in the World? — Was there ever Equality among Mankind? — Did God ever mean that there should be? — When did Men meet on the Square with single, uninfluenced Rights? — Unless we should except the Legion of Fable, conjured up by Charms and Magic : — Nor can that State of Nature ever take place — till Men driven mad by their Passions shall have pulled down all legal Government; — till all Social Degrees are abolished; and all Ties, Interests and Endearments (which may then very well be) of Family Union are dissolved : — Then indeed may the Son rise on the Father — the Father on the Son — and like those visionary Creatures of lying Antiquity, lift their hands, each against each; and true Catilines, crush and extinguish the Fire they shall have raised in one vast Demolition and Ruin. —

\* But, supposing this State of Nature, or a whole People, through

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\* It has been asserted by popular Writers, that all Power is in the People — What do they mean by the People? Do they mean that small comparative body of Men, who have property in Land? — That is TIMOCRACY — (which the Ancient

through Discontent having thrown off Government, now solemnly assembled, in order to consult and deliberate on a new Form and Model thereof. — Power, Right, Law, Justice, Property, Religion, all in Suspence and Abeyance! (which is the just consequence of such a Supposition) — Is it probable, that the *Majority* of a People should determine the Measure and Assignment of Lands in favour of the present Possessors; or that they should consent in the Renewal and Re-establishment of those Ranks and Orders, which now so excellently define and describe Society? — What! should the Lord cede to the Vassal? — The Judge to the Criminal? — The Magistrate to the Populace? — The Subject is big with Absurdity: — we pass it — and proceed. —

The Mosaic History confirmed by the best \* Heathen Testimony, gives us a very Natural account of the Rise and Progress of Society from Families to Tribes, from Tribes to Nations; severally dependent, first on Fathers, next on Patriarchs, then on Governors. — Dependency implies Power: — Be That where it will, it is enough for us, that it is; and as Scripture

Ancient Civilians maintained to be the worst of the three forms of Government.) or do they mean the People at large, the Collective Mass of a Nation, and that they have an inherent Right in Government — that is DEMOCRACY, the Corruption of TIMOCRACY. — Now observe — If Property gives Right in Government, then the Effect is antecedent to the Cause. For government is the Creator of Property, not the Creature of it. — And if the Power of Government is suspended, Property is null and common, for it has no security, but from Government. — If on the Contrary, it shall be said that a Right in Government is in the People at large, then also have they a Right to Property, and their Rights are injuriously withheld from them; — In either case we are reduced to Absurdity. — But let the Power of Government be ever so great, what is it compared with that great usurpation of all — the Right of Property? — There is a very fine Argument to prove the Absurdity of the Position that Power is in the People — In Selden de Jure, Nat. & Gent. Heb. B. I.

\* See Aristotle's Politics. B. I. C. ii.



Scripture teaches us,—from God:—We receive it as his Gift: — We own its Influence: — We feel its Blessings: — Whether collected in one stream, it flow strait and rapid, or circulate more slowly with divided Current,—it is still manifest—a Work of God;—nor does it like the Nile, mock our Gratitude, and frustrate all attempt to trace it to its Source, and present the firstfruits of its rich Exuberance at the Fountain-Head, the House of Waters. — 'Tis thine, O Power, to ascertain and protect our Rights of Nature, and to ingraft thy Penalties on the natural Restrictions of the human Will! Observant of these Rights — Obedient to these Restraints according as they are adjusted and secured by thee, — We are free — in any Government: — But if with an evil Eye, and a false Heart, we mistake these, and cast off the others, — we make *malicious* use of our Liberty, Apostates from all Engagement — to God — or Man — or Country.

To be Free in Thought, Word, or Deed, we must be cool and dispassionate.—Party is therefore irreconcilable with true Liberty. — Party being inseparable from Passion, whose treacherous Mirrour reflects all objects on the Eye of the Mind, disproportioned and distorted. — Hence Illegitimate assumption of Rights: — Unnatural Divorce from just Restraints: — In one word—Abuse of Liberty. For Party is in Politics as System in Literature, which by extending its Scale, and putting Proofs not to Trial but Torture, and with Mezentian Tyranny banding together Things incommensurate,—Times—Persons — Places — forces them to converge, how reluctantly soever, as Rays to the same Focus, and thence play off collectively on the same Ends and Objects, to the confusion of the Truth — and the shame of Learning.

With

With a wicked Heart and a corrupted Conscience, which is the true Source of Evil in all human Polity, be we ever so loud for Liberty, we are the veriest Slaves imaginable: — Though we choose not contradiction or crossing in Word or Sentiment, we conciliate notwithstanding the grossest contradictions in Life and Practice: — Selfwill as DESPOT, lords it over our Reason; at the same time that we experience all those Tides, Tumults and Vicissitudes, which can never fail to affect and agitate the REPUBLIC of Passions.

But to Men of subdued Minds; Party, Partiality removed, Members of Families, Members of Communities, Members of State; should illegal Injuries be offered by Power, and Violence committed on their Laws and Liberties; now—had they Right in consequence to resent such Insult, and redeem such Wrong; would they not see some Lets and Hindrances to any avowed overture and act of such Right, in those very complex Restraints, which would attach on the reflection; “ That they  
 “ had been born — bred — educated — under the Auspices  
 “ of Government; — That the plenteous Fruit and the secure Enjoyment of all the Blessings of Life — Goods —  
 “ Possessions — Ease — Luxuries — must be thereto only referred; — That thereby they are put under somewhat of the Fictitious Obligation — indissoluble — indefinite; — That the Wealth  
 “ and Prosperity of great Nations, for any Length of Years  
 “ cannot but, under God, be wrought on some settled Plans of  
 “ Wisdom and Goodness; — That something of Cession and  
 “ Self-denial might not misbecome a Subject; — something  
 “ of Rigour and Presumption, not disparage Power, (for the  
 “ finest Edge must be whetted, or contract a rust;) — That  
 “ great changes have the greatest dangers; — Men being easier  
 “ in



“ in Storm — than in dread of Earthquake ; — that to recover one arrow, they may lose both, — or that the shaft may glance, and missing Injustice, — kill Innocence ; — that Man is but a bad Judge at best, and probably no better Reformer.” — Innumerable indeed are the RESTRAINTS which such Men would discern, revere — obey, — and in that Discernment, Reverence and Obedience *find rest to the weary foot*, — have Peace within, — impart it abroad — and according to that primitive Precept, which the Minor Stoics assumed from the Christians, though they were too proud to own it — BEAR and FORBEAR, — and meeting the Sense of the Apostle in the verse preceding the Text, — *By WELL DOING — put to silence the IGNORANCE of foolish Men ;* — Guaranteed by Conscience in the *Use* of Liberty.

Let us not be deceived — and think Government criminal, — a People innocent. — that we only have Liberty — as if we only could act : — Kings are as free as their Subjects — and as long as they maintain the Laws, — Act under them — and advance no Rights in prejudice to our Rights, which are their proper Rules and Restraints, — they *use* their Liberty : — And whensoever a People unprovoked and uninjured — shall clamour for Concessions, — and usurping Rights on the governing Powers, prosecute them in such a manner as no Constitution can justify, — They *use* their Liberty indeed, — *but for the Cloke of Maliciousness*, — for that the Abuse of Liberty on both sides, in PEOPLE as well as PRINCE, — has brought all Governments to their End, — is a Truth stamped with Capitals in the Annals of Humanity.

At

At Athens — the Balance was on the side of the People, — they had Privileges and a great Prerogative, — their Ostracism — which gave such offence and umbrage to the Aristocratic Part of their State, — who had often unworthily and injuriously suffered from it — That one Half of the Nation conspired and complotted to undo the Other. — Hence Feasts — Plays — Shews — and dissipated Prostitution of every kind, with the toleration and even under the Sanction of Government. — The Magistrates sworn Guardians of the Morals of the People, were the first to contrive their corruption; — The People abused a Power reasonably indulged them for the terrour of bad Citizens, to the Prosecution and Proscription of the Best and Wisest. — *Liberty was used on both sides for the Cloke of Maliciousness.* — What was the Consequence? — The whole Nation fell into Indolence, Decay and Oblivion — and had nothing to do, but, as St. Paul describes them — *to tell and to hear some new Thing.*

At Rome, — Aristocracy prevailed over Monarchy, and divided the Power. — The People lost by the Revolution — and outwitted and oppressed — withdrew from the City — stood aloof — *Defied* — and *Petitioned*. — They gained their end, and were gratified with Tribunes. — They had before too little — They had now too much. — The Tribunitial *Intercession* became so importunate and afflicting a burden on business of State, that the Nobility despairing to recover their ground, had recourse to the Athenian Arts; by the successful application and practice of which — The Tribunate soon was made Slave to the Senate. — The People *Patrician* — Democracy the Tool of ambitious Aristocracy — The whole State filed off into Parties — which balancing one another, kept up Govern-



Government. — On their casual Reduction and decisive Division — Civil War commenced — Security set seal to Victory — and that renowned Republic, after some convulsions, expired in an easy, \* natural Dissolution, and died away in Monarchy and Peace.

Here we may observe the Abuse of Liberty.

First — in the Aristocracy — who to the great Detriment of the People secured to themselves the two Powers — Legislative and Executive. —

Next in the People — who in the Persons of their Tribunes exerted such exorbitant Rights, as were absolutely inconsistent with orderly Government — Which as they were turned against themselves to their utter Depravation and Ignominy; so did they serve to defeat the Aristocracy, who were the first Offenders, and sunk them too in Contempt and Servitude.

The Carthaginians were a great Maritime and Mercantile Nation — At vast Pains and Expence they had colonized Sardinia and great parts of Spain, in order to promote and enlarge their Commerce. — The Romans, who were jealous Neighbours, and a People totally Military, looked upon this extent of territory in a Naval and Commerical Power with great

\* According to Polybius — who in one of his Fragments on Government, maintains that Monarchy is the natural End of Aristocracy — and Ochlocracy as He calls it, or Mob-Government of Democracy. The Roman Government from the Time of the Gracchi, after that it became absolutely necessary for the Tribunate to be under Influence, was purely Aristocratical and managed by Aristocratical Parties — with us in the last Century — Democracy had its natural End in Ochlocracy or Mob-Tyranny.

great Indignation and Envy, and without the least pretext or provocation, took part with the Carthaginian Colonies, who had just began a Revolt, and encouraged and supported them in it. — The Carthaginians meditated a great Revenge — and projected an Expedition worthy of a free People, which their General undertook and successfully effected in the Invasion of Italy — But here was the Misfortune — a *Roman* Party soon sprung up in the Councils at Carthage — Hence Delays — Refusal of Supplies to the Army in Italy — and Hannibal unable to take the Field — Shipped off at last, sacrificed to the Fury, Treachery and dastard Infatuation of his fellow-citizens: — For this was the Nature of public business at Carthage, that all Matters whereon the Kings and Senate could not agree, devolved to the People — Whereby many Men of desperate fortunes, with craft and language enough

*To wield at will the great Democratic —*

grew Mighty in Opposition to the distress of Government, who to have Peace at Home at any rate, were forced to appoint them to great commands, wherein by every mode of Exaction and Extortion they might get rich at the cost of the People; — And yet the Author who gives us this account, and who was himself a consummate Master of all Civil Science, justifies the Expedient in the ruling Powers of Carthage, and maintains that it was the only one they had — *ἰασθαι* — \* to patch up and skin over the sores of the Constitution.

Here again we attribute the Abuse of Liberty with all its fatal effects.

First,

\* Arist. Polit. B. II. C. II.



First, \* To the Sardinian and Spanish Colonies, who threw off the Restraints of the Punic Parliament, and called in a Hostile Power to assist them in Rebellion against the Mother Country — They were punished, as they deserved — for they did but change Hands, and from Carthaginian Clients became Roman Tributaries.

Secondly, To the Faction, which obstructed the prosecution of the War in Italy — who having proditoriously relinquished their patriot Rights, disconcerted and discomfited that great Enterprize; the Failure of which was soon followed by the Destruction of the whole State.

The Carthaginians have been compared with Ourselves; — Circumstances countenance the Allusion. — They were a Free People as we are — They abused their Liberty — They suffered from it — We have done, we have suffered the same — May we not fill up the Measure of their Fate! — In our present distractions abroad and at home — Our Liberty is no other than our Duty. — Be our Rights in public Parsimony — whatever they are — They are all exhausted and absorbed by one great overbearing Restraint — the Necessity incumbent on us as Men and Citizens, to maintain the Honour — the Independence — Nay, the very Existence of the British Empire. To acknowledge this Restraint, and in devotion to it

C 2

\* The Three Causes of that great and memorable War — the 2nd Punic War according to Polybius, Book 3rd, were these — 1st. the perfidious dealing of the Romans in taking advantage of the Revolts in Sardinia, and making themselves Masters of that place, at a time when the Carthaginians were embroiled in a terrible and dangerous Civil War with their Mercenaries at Home — 2dly Hamilcar's Indignation — 3dly, the flourishing State of the Carthaginian Affairs in Spain.

it — to sacrifice our Rights — our Lives — our Substance  
is true Civil Liberty — Its just Use — Its perfect Operation.

From this Review, and these Observations on the causes of  
National Degeneracy and Decline, exhibited in the old De-  
mocracies; in the Outlines of whose Destiny there appeared  
the strongest and most conspicuous Marks of God's Moral  
Government and Judgment of the World; — We do most  
powerfully conclude,

“ That Moral, Civil and Religious Liberty are one and the  
“ same — and a kind of Trinity \* in Man. — That the Public  
“ and Private Character cannot be disunited — That the good  
“ Man is the good Citizen — That Men must reform them-  
“ selves in order to a State-Reformation — That we are not  
“ to expect Public Virtue from Private Vice — General Oe-  
“ conomy from Particular Bankruptcy — That the Abuse of  
“ Liberty has proved Perdition to the most flourishing States,  
“ being an *Issue* of the *Heart*, and wilful *Maliciousness* in every  
“ People — That God will visit the sins and depravities of  
“ Subjects on their Kings — of Kings on their Sub-  
“ jects — and that Vice and Wickedness in any Nation,  
“ must precipitate their fall and accelerate their final over-  
“ throw, unless by God's Blessing repelled, stayed and balanced  
“ by Integrity, Wisdom and virtuous Example in some part  
“ of the Government. — † That intemperate Inveective in  
“ Public

\* To prevent Misconstruction, it may be necessary to remark, that the same  
Action may at one and the same time be of a Moral, Civil and Religious Nature.

† It was the Abuse of Liberty in Language that debauched and enfeebled the  
Athenian Spirit — The same lulled and cajoled the Roman People — Its Ef-  
fects at Carthage are evident from those speeches in Livy, which are no doubt  
copied in great measure from Punic Histories — It destroyed our Government in  
the last Century — May it not have the same Issue in this?



“ Public Councils, is a National Grievance and an Outrage  
 “ against Heaven ; — For God will punish all blasphemous  
 “ Detraction of those *Powers*, which are from Him — all  
 “ *Evil speaking of Dignities*, which Himself has authorized —  
 “ And that as Parly with Temptation is Christian Guilt, so  
 “ to entertain Resistance in word or thought, while the Laws  
 “ are in Force — is a most inordinate Presumption of Right  
 “ — *Abuse of Liberty* — The very Deliberation no less than  
 “ — REVOLT ; the Mention — TREASON.”

We are looking Abroad — not at Home — We are talking  
 of Men and Measures — Let us turn our Eyes on the Man  
 within, and contemplate his Measures. — However the *Home*  
 prospect be unpleasing to Us — There is a God above, who  
 observes us all ; and conducts the Abuse of our Liberty to our  
 private Punishment — and public Destruction. — It is his  
 great Prerogative, to make the same Means fulfil and effectuate  
 subordinate and inferiour Ends, while that they still proceed  
 and prosecute — some vast unsearchable Scheme of his Pro-  
 vidence : — and the Man, who is truly Free, who uses his Li-  
 berty in good Action, according to the Inclination of Right or  
 Restraint, acts as much like the Deity as Man can act ; — for  
 at the same time, that by the *Use* of his Liberty, He fills up  
 the several Duties of Life, as a Civil — Moral — and Religi-  
 ous Being — He moves on in illustrious Progress, to the same  
 great and glorious Objects — GOD’S HONOUR and his own  
 SALVATION.



"Public Councils, is a National Offence and an Offence  
"against Heaven; — For God will punish all blasphemous  
"Distraction of those Powers, which are from Him — all  
"Evil Seeking of Divinity, which Himself has authorized —  
"And that as Early with Temptation is Christ's Gail, so  
"to entertain Resistance in word or thought, with His Laws  
"are in Force — is a most inordinate Transgression of Right  
"— Away of Liberty — The very Rebellion no less than  
"— Revolt, the Nation — Treason."

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